Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs
March 19, 2008

The following statement was issued by the Honourable Patty Pottle, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. It was also read in the House of Assembly:

Aboriginal Women on Path to Economic Prosperity

I rise today to inform honourable members of the third Annual Aboriginal Women's Conference that took place last week in St. John's.

The Path to Economic Prosperity was the theme of this year's conference, which focused on economic opportunities. Forty Aboriginal women from across the province gathered to hear from Aboriginal, government and business leaders, community groups, and others on the growing opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs. As well, information sessions were held on post-secondary education possibilities and current developments in several government sectors, including natural resources and tourism.

The first province-wide Aboriginal Women's Conference, *The Path to the Good Life,* was held in March 2006 in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. It focused on education, youth, employment, violence, and health care. The second conference, *The Path to the Good Life: Moving Forward, Building Strength,* was held in Stephenville in November 2006 and discussed issues relating to the justice system and poverty reduction.

This government firmly believes in a Newfoundland and Labrador where everyone is treated as equal and all persons have the opportunity to advance the way of life for themselves and their communities. In that spirit of equality, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to hearing directly from Aboriginal peoples on the issues and challenges that are important to them.

The Provincial Government recognizes the importance of the Aboriginal Women's Conference. It provides a venue for Aboriginal women to voice concerns, listen to ideas, and discuss options for a more prosperous future.

The Williams Government has worked to advance a number of recommendations made at past conferences. For example, in Budget 2007, funding for violence prevention grants to Aboriginal communities was doubled to $200,000 annually and funding for the annual conference was increased from $30,000 to $60,000 annually.

The Aboriginal women of Newfoundland and Labrador are strong and proud. While their contributions may not always have been recognized, I am pleased to say that this is changing because of events such as the Aboriginal Women's Conference. Aboriginal women have long contributed and will continue to contribute to the success of all Newfoundland and Labrador.

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